

Procedure for Submitting Petition Articles for Town Meeting Warrants

The schedule rules everything. Time must be allowed in advance of Town Meeting to write the petition; gather and certify signatures; undergo legal examination by Town Counsel; assemble, print, and advertise the Warrant; and so on..

1. **Determine the date on which the Warrant is to be closed.** The closing dates for acceptance of petition articles are the first Monday in February for the Spring (Annual) Town Meeting, the first Monday in August for the Fall Town Meeting, and thirty days prior to the date of any special town meeting. No article can be accepted after the closing date.
2. **Write your petition.** No wording may be changed after the first signature is placed on the petition. Seek assistance with the wording of your petition before signatures are collected. Help is available at the Town Clerk's and Town Administrator's offices.

The Town Government and Bylaw committee will hold workshops for citizens who wish to review the intent of the prospective article or obtain guidance on appropriate wording, and these will be held well in advance of the closing date of the town meeting Warrant. The workshops will NOT include legal advice, and thus private legal counsel is urged in order to avoid unnecessary effort or conflict with existing law.
3. **The format** of the petition, in addition to the wording considerations addressed above, must include the name, address, and telephone number of the petitioner (or a representative of the petitioners) with whom the Selectmen may communicate. Every signature page must present the full text of the petition, and such pages must provide spaces for each signer's signature, printed name, and printed street address. Those signing must be registered Rockport voters. A signature that cannot be verified is useless.
4. **Gather the signatures** needed for your petition. The number of signatures required varies according to the type of town meeting: Ten signatures are required for the Annual (Spring) Town Meeting; however, one hundred signatures are required for any special town meeting and the Fall Town Meeting.
5. **Submit** the original copies of the petition signature sheets to the Town Clerk before the closing date of the Warrant. The Town Clerk is required to certify every signature on your petition, so having extra signatures in excess of the quantity needed is advised.

Town Counsel will review your petition prior to Town Meeting in order to determine that it does not conflict with the laws of the Commonwealth.

At Town Meeting a petition article may be amended from the floor prior to its discussion. This action must be cleared with the Moderator prior to the meeting. Discussion of the amendment takes precedence and it must be voted up or down before proceeding with the main motion, however the latter is affected by the amendment process.

For further information: Selectmen's Policy #10-07: *Town Meeting Petition Articles*
 Selectmen's Policy #10-09: *Town Attorney Policy*